



Translation of Traditional Chinese Culture and Its Modern Cross-cultural Communication

Yong Liang

School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Jiaotong University, Chengdu, Sichuan, P.R. China

Corresponding Author: Yong Liang, E-mail: lukeliang@my.swjtu.edu.cn

ARTICLE INFO

Received: June 02, 2019

Accepted: June 30, 2019

Published: July 31, 2019

Volume: 2

Issue: 4

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2019.2.4.15

KEYWORDS

Chinese culture, the Governance of China, translation, strategy, cognition

ABSTRACT

Traditional culture is the root for modern China. The translation of Chinese cultural terms makes it possible to communicate widely with other communities. The study describes a self-collected Chinese-English parallel corpus of Chinese classical and cultural terms in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (I) & (II), with the theory of translation cognition and descriptive and comparative methods. It discusses the translators' subjectivity and analyzes translation strategies during translation. The results show that acceptability and expressiveness are main concerns for the English translations of Chinese traditional culture in the two volumes; the study also puts forward some suitable and effective ways in cross-cultural communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

China communicates more often with other countries in the 21st Century and high-quality translation of Chinese culture plays a big part in having effective dialogues. The first and second volumes, both Chinese and English versions, of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* 习近平谈治国理政 were published in 2014 and 2017 respectively (Xi, 2014; Xi, 2017). The main contents are President of China Xi Jinping's speeches, talks and articles, etc.

The importance of its English translation should not be overlooked, as it serves an important way for Chinese culture to interact with others for better communication. The translation process and strategies of those culture-loaded terms are worthwhile to be studied closely, so as to find out how and why the translators render Chinese into English in certain ways in this new era.

The translation of allusions in Chinese classics and historical books is not just about conversion of linguistic symbols, but also is related to cultural differences, image scheme and translation cognition. From the perspective of cognitive translation studies, the paper analyzes and explains translators' choice with the self-collected corpus data, and explores the process of translation. In addition, according to Lasswell's theory (1948) of communication, the study makes a deep description of the factors influencing the translation and cross-cultural communication of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*.

2. STUDIES OF COGNITIVE PROCESS IN TRANSLATION

The process of translation is a "black box". Recently, many scholars have discussed translation cognitive activities through certain technical means, such as eye-tracking system, which have become one of the academic frontiers of translation studies. The study of translator's subjectivity had its own academic records.

German linguistic philosopher Walter Benjamin's (1892-1940) *The Task of the Translator* (1932/2000) subverted the traditional view of translation from the philosophical level, adopting the concept of "pure language" to interpret the essence of translation, translatability, the relationship between the original and the translation, and emphasizes "something that cannot be communicated" and the importance of "rewriting" for the translator. (Benjamin, Trans. Zohn, & Ed. Venuti, 2000)

In the book *Discourse and the Translator*, co-authored by scholars Hatim Basil & Mason Ian, the authors explore the intertextuality in translation and point out that the translator is an important communicator for the source text and readers (Hatim & Ian, 2001).

Professor Chen (2014) from China pointed out that with the development of contemporary cognitive linguistics and the rise of corpus linguistics, the study of translators has gradually shifted from qualitative research to quantitative research.

Professor Wang (2017) discussed the factors involved in the process of translation on the basis of cognitive linguistics (CL). He believed that translation is a cognitive activity, which can make up for the defect of the traditional view from which translation is only regarded as language conversion.

Professor Wen (2018) pointed out that with the development of cognitive science, especially cognitive linguistics, the combination of cognitive linguistics and translation studies has become a major trend and formed a new paradigm.

Cognitive interpretation and translation research have been carried out in full swing. However, the author finds that the number of cognitive studies in translation combined with corpus is relatively small, especially those involving texts with abundant traditional Chinese cultures. As those cultural-loaded terms have the literary characteristics, which require a lot of translators' subjective decisions, so as to meet readers' various needs and also be faithful to the

source text. A corpus-based study of English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* may shed much light on the decisions and strategies on the translation of traditional Chinese cultures from the view of cognitive translation.

3. TRANSLATORS' COGNITION AND STRATEGIES BY QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The author has compiled nearly 200,000 characters of English-Chinese corpus of volumes I and II of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, as table 1 shows below. The author pays special attention to the choice of English translation of culture-loaded words in the book.

This paper divides the parallel Chinese-English corpus into three categories: (1) peoples' names and names of places, (2) ancient poems and proverbs, and (3) literary allusions. The micro-level analysis, especially with specific terms full of traditional Chinese culture, reveals the translators' cognition and translation tendency.

Table 1. Classification of Parallel Corpus of Traditional Chinese Culture in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*

Classification	Number of Tokens in Volume I		Number of Tokens in Volume II		Number of Tokens in Total	
(1) Names and Places	Chinese: 2,802	English: 9,506	Chinese: 2,418	English: 9,281		
(2) Poems and Proverbs	Chinese: 1,629	English: 6,395	Chinese: 4,187	English: 18,370	Chinese: 47,000	English: 180,000
(3) Literary Allusions	Chinese: 20,448	English: 76,578	Chinese: 15,521	English: 60,335		

3.1 Analysis of Translation of Personal Names and Place Names

Statistics show that in the English version of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, Chinese names are usually transliterated by modern Pinyin, such as Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) and Wang Anshi (王安石), and sometimes by Wade-Giles spelling for some widely-

accepted names, like Confucius (孔子) and Sun Yat-sen (孙中山).

Some extra information is sometimes added for certain ancient names, for example, Cen Shen (岑参) is followed by his dates of birth and death -- ca. 715-770; Xuan Zang (玄奘), "an eminent monk of the Tang Dynasty"; Zhang Qian (张骞) "a Chinese envoy"; and

Xi Zhongxun (习仲勋), “a Communist revolutionary and former vice premier”.

In the above transliterations and additions, though “an eminent monk” explains Xuanzang's important historical significance as a famous Buddhist, his role of being a great translator from Sanskrit to Chinese is not mentioned. In other words, the translation doesn't adopt the methods of “thick translation” in many cases.

“Chinese envoy” indicates Zhang Qian's achievements, but it doesn't introduce his basic information, such as the Han Dynasty (BC 202-220 AD) he lived in and his story of being an envoy dispatched to the western part of ancient China by the Emperor Liu Che. The target readers may not get much cultural information about these famous Chinese names and important historical figures.

While “Communist revolutionary and former Vice Premier” is an explanation to one of the former leaders Xi Zhongxun's belief and work, but some information is missed, for example he is the father of President Xi Jinping.

The author holds that readers' recognition of the above names and the images formed in their minds can only be richer or even of picturesqueness by more supplementary information by the way of adding endnote at each section. Through effective interpretation, readers can eventually form a more comprehensive perception of ancient and modern Chinese characters. Accurate name translation and supplements of appropriate background information may help to form a better cognitive understanding.

3.2 Analysis of Translation of Chinese Classical Poetry

Table 2. Examples of English Translation of Chinese Poetry

Source Language (Chinese Version)	Target Language (English Translation)
(1) ^{shàonián xīn kǔ ū zhōngshēn shì} “少年辛苦终身事， ^{mò xiàng guāng yīn duò cùn gōng} 莫向光阴惰寸功” <i>Xi Jinping: The Governance of China I</i> , Chapter 6, p183	“Work hard when young, and you will have a future; time flies, and you should not slacken your efforts” <i>Xi Jinping: The Governance of China I</i> , Chapter 6, p203
(2) ^{gǒu lì guójiā shēng sǐ yǐ} “苟利国家生死以， ^{qǐ yīn huò fú bì qū zhī} 岂因祸福避趋之” Volume I, Chapter 18, p406	“Doing everything possible to save the country in its peril without regard to personal fortune or misfortune” Volume I, Chapter 18, p453
(3) ^{qū yuán de} 屈原的“ ^{cháng tài xī yǐ yǎn tì xī} 长太息以掩涕兮， ^{āi mǐn shēng zhī duō jiǎn} 哀民生之多艰” Volume II, Chapter 9, p317	“Examples are ‘I sigh and cry, how hard life is for my countrymen’ by Qu Yuan” Volume II, Chapter 9, p346

Through the English translation of the poems listed in Table 2 above and cited in Volumes I and II, the content actually expresses the original authors' concern for the country and the people. By quoting these poetic sentences, the text is bound up with more literary traits and the translation of these terms may pose a challenge for translators or the translation team.

The above poetic texts, taking into account of sound, form and meaning, are translated into English counterparts with extreme care. In the English translation, “sigh” and “cry” are melodically catchy. As for the figure of speech, English grammatical structure matches Chinese sentences. The translation keeps the original format. For example, in the first sentence above, the translation is divided into two parts, i.e. “work hard...” and “time flies...”. As for the

translation of meaning, such as the second and third sentences, the acceptability of the translation are considered firstly, so as to avoid under-translations.

In poetry translation, image processing is equally important. The original Chinese expression of the “life and death” of the official in sentence 2 is translated into “fortune or misfortune” in English through image transformation. It changes the metaphorical objects for better understanding in modern western community.

Similarly, more techniques of conversion in translation can be easily found, such as “Being the first to worry about the affairs of the state and the last to enjoy oneself.” (Vol. I, Chapter 18, p453), and “For pretty county officials like us, every concern of the people weighs in our heart” (Vol. II, Chapter 9, p346). In these translations, the translation strategy of domestication is adopted, it applies the idiomatic expression in English languages to convey the meaning of the source text. It may arouse more consensus for the understanding of the original information.

3.3 Analysis of English Translation of Literary Allusions

Many Chinese traditional masterpieces are translated by literal translation with annotations. For instance, one poem *Qi Yue* 七月 (*The Seventh Month*) in *Shi Jing* 诗经 (*the Book of Songs*) is translated literally, reflecting the farmer’s hard work. Another poem *Chile Ge* 敕勒歌 (*the Song of the Chile*), depicting nomadic lives in ancient northern China, is noted by “a folk song of the Northern Dynasties (386-581)” . (Vol. II, p350) With these notes, readers, if they are interested in Chinese literature, may have more access to the way of Chinese ancient narration and literary tradition.

Translating metaphors by transforming cultural images is also applied in the translation process for

better cognition of the original culture. Metaphors are commonly seen in the translation of both vol. I and II. As one of the classic works of metaphor studies in cognitive linguistics, *Metaphors We Live By* Lakoff and Johnson (2003), highlighted the close relationship between metaphor, human thinking and cognitive process, by analyzing different types of metaphors and the core content of conceptual metaphor.

For example, the translation of “Shili Yangchang” (十里洋场) in Shanghai is “the concession”. The expression Yangchang 洋场 can be understood as the concession of the old Shanghai Bund with many foreigners, or the modern prosperous market. In English, concession usually concerns with rights, and concession territory refers to place occupied and managed by powerful countries in weak countries. Therefore, cultural imagery is different. In the translation, from the context of the development of national industry after the Opium War in China, the meaning of concession accurately reflects the epochal meaning.

Another example is Qili Ma 千里马 (horses able to run a thousand *li* a day), which is rendered into “capable people” and related closely with the words “talents” and “gifted people” in the contexts, where the translation strategy of domestication is applied.

4. AN OVERALL ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION STYLE

Through corpus statistical software Antconc and Excel, the corpus types, tokens, ratio of type and token, average word length and word frequency table are sorted out and analyzed. The translation style of terms with traditional cultures in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China I & II* is listed in table 3 with the comparison of other two translations of Chinese classic Daxue 大学 (*Great Learning*).

Table 3. Comparison of English Translations of Vol. I & II and *Great Learning*

Corpus Analysis and Comparison	<i>Governance of China</i> Vol. I (2014)	<i>Governance of China</i> Vol. II (2017)	<i>Great Learning</i> (大学 trans. James Legge) (1893)	<i>Higher Education</i> (大学 trans. Gu Hongming) (2016)
Types	3,200	2700	799	746
Tokens	19,188	17,705	3534	3509
Type/Token (TTR %)	16.7%	15.2%	22.61%	21.26%
Average Word Length	4.465	4.629	4.468	4.254

Table 3 gives a statistical analysis of the English translation of words and sentences related to Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, the paper analyzes the overall translation characteristics and styles. In *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, Type/Token (TTR) of Vol. I and II are respectively as low as 16.7% (Vol. I) and 15.2% (Vol. II) comparing with those of two English versions of *Daxue* 大学 (*Great Learning* or *Higher Education*), one of the four classical Confucian books. It shows that the lexical complexity is lower than that in the translation of *Daxue*, which is also full of a lot of traditional Chinese cultural terms. Moreover, through the analysis of word frequency list and key words, it can be concluded that Volume I and Volume II are more inclined to consider the readability of the translation.

Among them, function words are used more frequently, and the choice of vocabulary is characterized by the unification of terms. Especially through the analysis of word frequency table, for example, the top-five word frequencies are prepositions or articles, such as in the first volume, the word frequency order is as follows: “the” (1142), “and” (861), “of” (635), “to” (491), and “a” (431).

Among the English-translated vocabulary of Volume I and Volume II, with the help of the above statistics, the most frequently used notional words are “people”. For example, the word “people” appeared 129 times in the first volume, while the second volume 173 times. Corpus-based approach and translation cognitive approach share common ground in research, just as Hu Kaibao puts forward these two approaches can be merged and the research mainly covers translation and

metaphor, cognitive process of translation, translator’s aesthetic psychology and the influence of cultural psychology on translators. (Hu, 2016)

The English versions of Volumes I and II are characterized by expressiveness in translation as the criteria for expression, but not by the pursuit of the full transmission of flowery words and images of the original text. The goal is to have accurate and complete translation of the original text and better readability.

The texts are geared to a wider audience in the West, and readers can, in this way, quickly understand the important points and connotations of the book. The domestication strategy is important for language conversion for the explanation of one’s own culture and cross-cultural communication. With high-quality and readable translations, plus concern of cultural factors outside the text, such as the people in communication, channels and other cultural aspects, the communication effect could be better achieved.

5. DISCUSSION

The translated versions of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China I & II* have been spread widely overseas, with over 20 languages and more than 6 million copies in circulation

The factors influencing the effect of cross-cultural communication can be analyzed according to the “5W” communication theory to provide some enlightenment. Harold D. Lasswell (1902-1978), American political scientist, put forward the theories of communication, such as three functions of communication, effective communication and so on.

In his work *The Structure and Function of Communication in Society*, “5W” model was put forward, i.e. “who”, “says what”, “in which channel”, “to whom”, and “with what effect”. (Lasswell, 1948) It is still applicable in the study of cross-country communication for oriental and occidental civilization.

In terms of subjects and channels, *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* has been introduced to foreign cultures by various ways, such as through online reports, offline publishing conferences and international book exhibitions. For example, the book launching ceremony sometimes was witnessed by Chinese government officials and foreign government leaders, usually held in foreign capital cities, together with the promotion of mainstream media networks at home and abroad. Besides, Facebook platform of Xinhua Press, radio channels including Himalayan FM and other forms are widely used. These flexible ways are indeed important, but it should be noted that the content of the original book and the translation are also the very keys for better acceptance and recognition.

In addition, some paratext factors are also significant for better communication, for example, the printing and packaging, the unified cover, a number of working photos of President Xi Jinping at various stages in the book. These undoubtedly will enable readers to establish a more comprehensive image of China and the way President Xi manages the country.

As for the target audience, it covers more than 160 countries in the world. Its audience may include leaders of other countries, government officials and readers in many fields, such as economy, education, science and technology. Readers take what they need.

In terms of content, some readers are problem-oriented. They hope to find useful information in the book to solve real problems, especially the key issues such as economy, poverty alleviation, anti-corruption and Road and Belt Initiative. Then, the translation of some key cultural terms is vital for the readers to apprehend the intended meaning. The cognition of the readers, to a very large extent, derives directly from the translation of culture-loaded expression.

Moreover, the English translation team of the book has a large number of experts, and the whole process includes translation, proofreading, revision and finalization, which were conducted and completed by

the team. It is important to point out that the unification of some key terms in translation is very important, especially for those in the second volume that have close relationship with those in the first volume, and they need to be translated in the same way in most cases.

In terms of the effect of translation and transmission, it needs time to be testified. But it is a window for foreigners to know China and Chinese management system in a different way. Just as Mark Zuckerberg (2017), founder & CEO of Facebook, said “I’ve bought copies of this book for my colleagues as well. I want them to understand socialism with Chinese characteristics”^① Also, by analyzing the translation of the text in the two volumes, it helps not only foreigner understand China, but also is beneficial for translators in China and abroad to discuss some effective models or strategies in modern times for the effective translation of Chinese traditional culture.

6. CONCLUSION

Admittedly, the contradictions between political and economic development in the international community are commonly seen in the 21st century. But scholars should never cease to make progress for a better cross-cultural communication and bright future of all human beings.

According to the above analysis, it can be seen that great importance is attached to readability of the translation, and the distinctive linguistic features also, in turn, confirm this reader-oriented strategy. It needs to be noted that neutral words are necessary in cross-cultural communication without boasting, especially for cultures with diverse differences, so as to achieve better communication effect.

More and more countries are cooperating with China. The translations of cultural terms, such as idioms, poems, old sayings, in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China I & II* are necessary to be studied carefully, because they represent the voice of China and also it may shed light to the translation of other classic texts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research is under the support of the grants: (1) Center for American Studies, Southwest Jiaotong University, Sichuan, China, Project No. ARC2018026; (2) Sichuan Social Science and Philosophy Research Project, No. SC17B096.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yong Liang obtained his B.A. in English Language and Literature, and M.A. in Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. Now he is a doctoral candidate in Chinese Language and Literature, interested in Translation Studies and Comparative Literature, at School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Jiaotong University, Chengdu, China.

NOTES:

- ① Xi Jinping: The Governance of China.
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/xismoments/2017-05/09/content_29270307.htm 2017-05-09

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